



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ENGLAND AND HER RETARDED CHILDREN

HERBERT LEATHER
Manchester, England

Although the English Education Act of 1870 placed upon the school boards the responsibility of dealing with all children of school age, it was not until thirty years afterward that the claims of retarded children to educational consideration were recognized by the central government. An alarming and steady increase of lunacy, together with an accompanying decline in the physical condition of English people generally, has caused public attention to be focused with increasing concentration upon the problem of the feeble-minded child and the conditions under which he is propagated. Recently several of the larger school boards, notably those of London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, and Bradford made independent inquiries with a view to ascertaining the number of retarded children of school age under their jurisdiction. Some startling discoveries were made. Large numbers of unfortunate children, who by their defects were able to evade the law of compulsory school attendance, were found to be living under such conditions of pure animalism as constituted a grave menace to the social system.

Miss Dendy, of Manchester, who has devoted her life to the interests of the feeble-minded, conducted an inspection of 40,000 pupils attending the schools of Manchester, and 500 cases of abnormal mental defect were observed and classified. These figures give a percentage for school pupils slightly in excess of 1.2 per cent., but taking into account the cases which are confined to the home, Miss Dendy calculates the proportion for all children of school age at 2 per cent.; and it is interesting to note the opinion of experts in lunacy that such children are usually the offspring of mentally defective parents. The complexity of the general problem is apparent in the fact that of some 250,000 persons in England and Wales who may be accounted as of deficient intellect, only half have been certified for permanent

detention in homes. As a result of the inquiries, special schools for retarded children were founded in the large towns. The general intention was that the children should receive simple instruction in small classes under specialist teachers, until such proficiency in studies had been attained as would enable them to be drafted into the common schools. But in practice the theory proved quite unworkable. Often the children were admitted to the special schools without any attempt at classification; pupils who were merely mentally backward were associated with epileptics and idiots. The teachers had to be ceaselessly active, and many bear permanent marks of the violence of their pupils in the early days of the special school system. And as curricula were based upon the requirements of the common schools the work of the pioneer special centers was carried on under almost impossible conditions.

When the pupils left the special schools it was found that they were unable to do work which called for effort of a sustained character. In speaking of the general results of the special school system, Dr. James Kerr, medical officer of the London County Council Schools, reports:

A considerable proportion of the pupils show little moral restraint, some are almost without speech, some seem incapable of work, others work without progress or intelligence; very frequently too they are addicted to staying out or even wandering at night, and many of this class come into the hands of the police. Some have bad habits, and immoral tendencies are common. Many are capable of control while in the special school, but speedily become irregular and uncontrollable on leaving it. About one-third will be capable of materially contributing to their livelihood after leaving, one-third will partially contribute but require an after-care association of some kind to watch over them, whilst the remainder should not be allowed to mix with the rest of the community, but should receive some kind of custodial treatment.

In the case of Bradford it was found to be characteristic of special school boys that though they could do some kinds of work and generally found situations when they left school, they never kept their places and were always on the streets, being dismissed usually, not for physical inability to do the manual work required of them, but for some eccentricity of conduct.

Our experience in Manchester [runs the report], is that the boys very often get work when they leave the special school, but they keep it only for a short time. The best of them keep their places only so long as they can be considered to be boys. When it comes to a question of men's wages they are turned adrift. Nobody wants them. Others who are presentable in appearance and of good address get place after place, but are rarely in employment for any length of time. Undoubtedly the newly introduced Employers' Liability act will further militate against the chances of work for the mentally backward.

Of the cases which passed through the special schools of London during a fixed period, only 12 per cent. were eventually reported as being in receipt of good wages and only 34 per cent. were classified as satisfactory with regard to their moral condition.

Perhaps the most practical work of the early special school experiments was the classification of cases according to their distinctive defects. It was at first a most difficult matter to distinguish between the backward type of pupil and the defective; but generally speaking it is now recognized that the first class comprises those children who have a definite sense of responsibility in what they undertake; and their innate slowness of conception is not so fatal as, in later life, to prevent them from earning a living. In a physiological sense such cases would be normal. Within the second class may be grouped such cases as are marked by a notable degree of irresponsibility, which may or may not be accompanied by slowness of perception; but there is nearly always present some physiological defect—faulty formation of the palate, of the organs of sight and hearing, of the spine, or of the skull, which causes the pupil to be insensible to the usual methods of the school tutor. "No school training can cure the feeble-minded child" has been the experience of the pioneer English experiments in this field.

It was not until 1899 that the government, roused by the spade-work of the large towns, passed the Defective and Epileptic Children Act which empowered, but did not compel, the authorities to provide for such children in every locality. This act recognizes defective children as a class as distinguishable from the sane and the insane, and provides legislation for them up to the age of sixteen. Being permissive, this act has not been

generally adopted. Apart from the towns, only three counties have set it in force—Cheshire, Shropshire, and Surrey. In all there are now 179 special schools accommodating 11,000 children.

While it is not compulsory upon education committees to provide schools for weak-minded children, it is compulsory upon parents to avail themselves of such schools when these are provided, and when they are directed to do so by the responsible education authority. This arrangement leads to many difficulties; for parents desiring to have their children specially instructed will move into districts where such instruction is provided; while parents wishing to avoid attendance at special schools for their children evade the law by moving out of the area provided for. At the present time children can be admitted into special schools at the age of five and can be legally detained until the age of sixteen years; so that in the eye of the law mental defect ceases automatically at the latter age.

The absurdity of this legislative action has been repeatedly proved by the results of after-care committees in nearly every town. Recent returns from Liverpool show that only 18 per cent. of ex-special-school pupils provide satisfactory reports, while the Birmingham committee supplies satisfactory records for 16 per cent. of the cases under observation. It is evident therefore that the work of the special schools is at present nullified for want of legal provision for the permanent detention of the worst cases in custodian homes.

If a child in the primary school is thought to be of defective mentality, he is sent by the teacher to the local special school for examination by the medical officer, after which he is retained in the school on probation and ultimately is (1) returned to the ordinary school as not being defective; (2) dismissed as being too defective; (3) retained in the special school until the age of fourteen or sixteen. For imbeciles (class 2) there is no provision whatever, save that provided by the poor-law authorities.

In order to carry on the work of the special schools, the Lancashire and Cheshire Society for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-Minded was formed several years ago mainly through the initiative of Miss Dendy. An estate of 500 acres had been pur-

chased by the trustees of David Lewis—a millionaire merchant prince—for the purpose of establishing a colony for epileptics, and as the whole of the land was not needed for this object, a freehold-site of 20 acres was given by the trustees to the new society. Upon this land three houses and a day school were erected; and at a later period the same trustees provided a convalescent home and country schools for the purposes of the society's work. According to the report of the Royal Commission recently issued, this experiment is the most complete yet made for permanently providing for the feeble-minded. At first a small school for little boys was opened, followed by a similar school for girls. Next a schoolhouse was added; and as, with the growth of members, there was not sufficient accommodation, an adjoining farm was rented. In the farmhouse the older boys sleep, these being drafted thither as soon as they are too old to sleep with the little boys. From the first the principle has been adopted that no children older than thirteen years shall be admitted, many are received at a much younger age; hence there is little difficulty in maintaining harmonious discipline. By means of co-operation with the Cheshire County Council and the education authorities of Manchester, Salford, Bolton, and Blackburn a regular yearly income is guaranteed on behalf of the children sent from these districts and as there is a substantial grant from the Board of Education on behalf of the younger inmates under school instruction in the home, its committee is able to meet other financial calls from private sources.

The cost of the children at Sandlebridge is \$100 per head per annum; the cost of keeping an ordinary law-breaker is \$120 per annum, while that of a convict amounts to \$200 per annum. So great has been the success of the experiment that three years ago an adjacent estate was purchased. It had on it a very good farmhouse, a large mansion—Warford Hall—with a lodge and cottage. It has also splendid gardens and greenhouses and seventy-four acres of good land. The hall has been adapted to the needs of the older girls and at the present time the equipment is perfect. There are now close on two hundred boys and girls on the estate, of ages ranging from ten to twenty.

There are about one hundred acres of land under cultivation. Eight of the boys work on the farm and twelve in the gardens, and as they are encouraged to believe that the whole place with the animals, etc., belongs to them they take great pride in their work and its results. The boys who sleep at the farm rise in summer at 5:45 A.M., work with the men until breakfast, and after prayers go out again to work until dinner time. They work again on the farm until tea, the monotony being pleasantly relieved by an occasional journey to town with produce, helping with the threshing-machine, hay-making, etc. After tea, unless there is pressure of work, their time is their own save that they must wash themselves thoroughly and clean their boots. Two or three of the boys have small plots of land upon which they devote much energy. They are allowed to sell what they produce. When the evenings are spent indoors the form of recreation is decided by each in turn; one night it will be singing, another night games, another reading aloud. The hour for retiring is 8 P.M. There are six practical men on the farm who do not leave the boys at work under them until they see them under the care of the matron or one of the teachers. On Sunday, which is always kept as a day of reading, singing, and walking, simple services are held in the schoolhouse, the big boys and girls having separate rooms for this purpose. When the festivals of the year occur—Shrove Tuesday, Easter, May Day, Christmas—little treats are given which are greatly appreciated by the young people.

It has been found that the girls are less easy to manage in some respects than the boys, as they are more quarrelsome, more restless, and more delicate. Under the supervision of two laundry instructors the girls do all the washing for the colony, which includes a resident staff of twenty-six, in addition to the children. The girls also do a great deal of knitting and sewing and go through an extensive course of physical exercises. They are dressed as prettily as possible, and the home feeling is fostered by considering their tastes as to work whenever possible. It is curious to note that many of them prefer laundry work to any other, though many of them are fond of light tasks in the garden,

such as weeding, cutting lavender, etc. Such work, however, is given rather as a privilege than as regular employment.

A great point is made of good manners; it is found quite possible to make all the pupils behave so well that there is no objection to better-class children associating with them. The toilet, meals, play, and school are all made means of conveying lessons in good manners. It has been found that cold has a marked effect upon retarded children and great care is taken in the Sandlebridge colony to secure cosy conditions at all hours and seasons. Throughout the experiment the fact has been emphasized that it is easy to control feeble-minded children if they are never allowed to indulge animal passions. It has been found that a mature weak-minded girl who has once gone wrong can only be reclaimed under forcible detention; hence the emphasis laid by the Sandlebridge authorities upon the importance of early admission to the colony.

In addition to the usual subjects taken by special-school pupils—including simple games and songs, nature-study, manual work, as joinery, etc., basket-making, chair-caning, cookery and needle-work for girls, drawing and brushwork, with modeling—both boys and girls at Sandlebridge learn to knit, darn, and sew, and do rug-work. They knit all their own vests, and many, their own stockings. The health of the children, which is supervised by a special medical officer, is excellent, as is shown by the fact that there have only been three deaths since the school was opened five years ago. During the same period three pupils have been discharged, and seven removed by parents. The farming operations are eminently satisfactory. The milk supply alone last year reached \$2,000 in value. Stock is raised without the necessity of purchasing fodder during the winter months, sufficient hay being produced on the farm for the purpose. Potatoes, wheat, oats, mangels, and cabbages are the most successful crops raised. The glass and kitchen gardens form another profitable department. The balances of profit on the working of the farm and gardens for the last two years are \$2,250 and \$1,600 respectively.

The report of Dr. Eichholz, the eminent specialist in mental disease, who visited the school last year, runs :

The children now in residence have been selected for training after very careful scrutiny as to which children are fit for a colony school of this type, a distinction having to be made so as to exclude imbeciles on the one hand and those who are educable in day schools on the other. On the educational side of the institution every effort is made to develop such slender powers as the children possess by means of the usual schoolroom subjects, manual work, physical exercises, and music, this department being very ably conducted.

On the domestic side the children show great improvement in physical appearance and in vigor of movement. Good manners, a proper attitude to work, fair play, and the cultivation of a neighborly feeling are matters upon which stress is laid both in school and home. The opening of Warford Hall for older girls, the separation of the younger boys' home from the rest of the colony, are new features which go to make organization and classification less difficult than before. With the industrial provision for adolescents and adults added to their school, the committee are able to regard their institution as a model scheme of administration for handling the whole problem of the feeble-minded at every stage.

It is worthy of note that Manchester, the center of English industry, is fully alive to its educational responsibilities for those whose misfortunes are indirectly due to the exacting demands of modern industrialism upon the mental and physical constitution of the workers. For the mentally retarded there are the special schools and the Sandlebridge Colony; for the crippled, the lovely home and school at Swinton; for the children in the poorer districts, the country school at Mobberley, where batches of pupils are taught throughout the milder months; for the epileptic, the David Lewis Colony. Birmingham has already opened an institution modeled on the lines of that at Sandlebridge and important developments on behalf of retarded children are now being carefully planned in many English educational centers.